

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 9507

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PCAT PORG IS UNSC SF
SUBJ: ISRAELI RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

REF.: TEL AVIV 9159

1. SUMMARY: IN A CONVERSATION NOVEMBER 18 WITH CONGRESSMAN CHARLES DIGGS, MFA OFFICIALS REAFFIRMED ISRAEL'S INTENTION FULLY TO RESPECT THE UNSC ARMS EMBARGO ON SOUTH AFRICA. THEY ALSO NOTED THE ISRAELI CONCERN ABOUT THE LARGE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA, STRESSED THAT NO AGREEMENTS WERE CONCLUDED DURING THE 1976 VISIT TO ISRAEL BY PRIME MINISTER VORSTER OTHER THAN AN ORAL AGREEMENT TO INCREASE COMMERCIAL RELATIONS, AND STRESSED THAT ISRAEL HAS NEVER HAD TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA IN NUCLEAR MATTERS. END SUMMARY

2. ON NOV 18, CONGRESSMAN DIGGS MET WITH A GROUP OF MFA OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH AFRICA AND WITH SOUTH AFRICA IN PARTICULAR; THE MFA GROUP WAS HEADED BY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL YESHAYAHU ANUG. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS WAS ACCOMPANIED BY STAFF MEMBER DR. HERSCHELLE CHALLENGER AND EMBASSY CONTROL OFFICER.

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3. DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA. RESPONDING TO CONGRESSMAN DIGGS' REMARKS THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS A THREAT TO PEACE AND THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION IS A FIRST STEP IN MEETING THAT THREAT, ANUG SAID HE WOULD AGREE THAT SOUTH AFRICA COULD BECOME A THREAT TO WORLD PEACE IF IT DOES NOT CHANGE. HOWEVER, HE SUGGESTED THAT WE NOT WRITE OFF THE POSSIBILITY THAT INTERNAL CHANGES MAY

OCCUR BECAUSE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, SOUTH AFRICA HAS SEEN THE THREAT OF WORLD ISOLATION. HE AGREED THAT INTERNAL CHANGES WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE REGARDED AS SUFFICIENT BY MOST COUNTRIES BUT HE FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GIVE THE SOUTH AFRICANS A CHANCE TO REACT TO THE NEW SITUATION BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE IMPOSITION OF THE ARMS EMBARGO. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE FELT THAT OTHER COUNTRIES, EXCEPT FOR THE UNITED STATES, WERE NOT YET READY FOR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS, AND SAID THAT THE ARMS EMBARGO WAS SUFFICIENT FOR THE TIME BEING. HE SAID THAT ISRAEL WILL FULLY RESPECT SECURITY COUNCIL DECISIONS REGARDING SOUTH AFRICA.

4. THE CONGRESSMAN SAID THAT HE HAD NOTED A NUMBER OF MEDIA REPORTS WHICH SUGGESTED THAT ISRAEL MIGHT LOOK FOR LOOPHOLES IN ORDER TO CONTINUE ARMS SUPPLIES TO SOUTH AFRICA. ANUG SAID THAT THE FIRST ISRAELI STATEMENT WAS NOT AN AUTHORIZED POSITION. IT WAS NATURAL FOR EVERY GOVERNMENT TO STUDY CAREFULLY AN IMPORTANT SECURITY COUNCIL DECISION. THE SPIRIT OF ISRAELI REACTION WILL BE FULLY CONSISTENT WITH THE SECURITY COUNCIL EMBARGO.

5. SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY. ANUG THEN WENT ON TO REVIEW THE HISTORY OF THE LARGE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION OF THAT COMMUNITY TO APARTHEID. HE ADMITTED THAT ISRAEL IS IN A PRECARIOUS POSITION: IF IT DOES NOT SPEAK UP IN THE UN AGAINST APARTHEID.

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THEID, IT IS ATTACKED BY THE ARABS AND ZIONISM IS LINKED TO RACISM; IF IT DOES SPEAK UP AGAINST APARTHEID, IT FACES THE POSSIBILITY OF PLACING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA IN A DIFFICULT POSITION IN THAT COUNTRY.

6. DR CHALLENGOR ASKED HOW FAR ISRAEL MIGHT GO IN EXTENDING ASSISTANCE TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IF UNREST ESCALATES WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE EUROPEAN POPULATION COMES UNDER THREAT. ANUG SAID ISRAEL CANNOT GO VERY FAR; IT CAN ONLY OFFER REFUGE TO THOSE WHO DECIDE TO LEAVE. ISRAEL WILL ATTEMPT TO FIND A WAY QUIETLY TO CONVINCE AS MANY JEWS AS POSSIBLE TO LEAVE BUT WITHOUT CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF GLOOM OR THREAT. ISRAEL IS HANDICAPPED IN THIS EFFORT BECAUSE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS KNOW THAT LIFE IN ISRAEL WOULD NOT BE AS COMFORTABLE AS IN SOUTH AFRICA. ANUG COMMENTED THAT THE THREAT OF CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA WOULD INDEED BE A THREAT TO WORLD PEACE BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF INTERVENTION BY OUTSIDE COUNTRIES AND THIS IS AN ADDITIONAL REASON WHY WESTERN NATIONS MUST HELP SOUTH AFRICA FIND A SOLUTION TO ITS PROBLEMS.

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7. MILITARY COOPERATION. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS THEN ASKED ABOUT REPORTS HE HAD SEEN THAT AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED DURING THE VORSTER VISIT IN 1976 INVOLVING THE EXCHANGE OF MILITARY PERSONNEL, RECIPROCAL TRAINING EXERCISES, AND A BROAD RANGE OF MILITARY COOPERATIVE EFFORTS. ANUG REPLIED THAT HE HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR PLANNING THE VORSTER VISIT AND WAS PRESENT AT ALL DISCUSSIONS. HE COULD STATE CATEGORICALLY THAT THE ONLY AGREEMENT RESULTING FROM THAT VISIT WAS AN ORAL AGREEMENT TO INCREASE TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND THIS TRADE DID NOT INCLUDE MILITARY SUPPLIES. HE POINTED OUT THAT ISRAEL HAS MOVED VERY SLOWLY TO FULFILL EVEN THAT AGREEMENT AND CITED THE CUSTOMARY FIGURE THAT ISRAELI TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA IS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN COMMERCE. ANUG STATED CANDIDLY THAT ISRAEL CONSIDERS IT IMPORTANT THAT SOUTH AFRICA BE MAINTAINED AS A WESTERN ORIENTED COUNTRY FOR STRATEGIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL REASONS, BUT DURING THE VORSTER VISIT IT BECAME CLEAR TO THE ISRAELIS THAT HE HOPED TO NORMALIZE AND IMPROVE SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB STATES AND HE WAS THEREFORE NOT INTERESTED IN STRONGER TIES WITH ISRAEL. HE SAID LATER, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM DR CHALLENGOR, THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS DIVERSIFIED ITS SOURCES OF OIL SUPPLIES AND NOW IS LESS DEPENDENT ON IRAN
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THAN FORMERLY.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH THE ARMS EMBARGO. DR CHALLENGOR ASKED IF ANY DECISION HAD BEEN REACHED BY THE GOI REGARDING ITS ADHERENCE TO THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE SC RES REGARDING EXISTING CONTRACTS FOR WEAPONS SALES. ANUG GAVE AN EVASIVE ANSWER AND SAID HE WAS UNABLE TO GO INTO DETAILS BUT STATED AGAIN THAT ISRAEL GENUINELY DESIRES TO COMPLY WITH THE RESOLUTION. IT IS BEING STUDIED CAREFULLY BY THE MINISTRY'S LEGAL OFFICIALS AND HE COULD NOT YET GIVE THE FINAL DECISION. HE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAS SKILLS, RAW MATERIAL AND THE LABOR FORCE TO BECOME GENERALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT IN ARMS SUPPLIES.

9. NUCLEAR COOPERATION. DR CHALLENGOR SAID SHE HAD NOTED REPORTS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE AND ASKED IF THIS EXTENDED TO NUCLEAR MATTERS? ANUG REPLIED THAT THE NUCLEAR ISSUE IS SO SENSITIVE THAT ISRAEL WOULD NEVER HAVE COMMITTED THE MISTAKE OF LINKING ITSELF TO THE SOUTH AFRICANS IN THIS FIELD. THERE IS NO LINK AND NEVER WAS. IF ISRAEL SHOULD DECIDE TO BUILD NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS IT MAY ENTER INTO CONTRACTS TO PURCHASE SOUTH AFRICAN URANIUM FOR FUEL BUT THIS IS A LEGITIMATE PURPOSE AND THAT SUPPLY WOULD BE UNDER IAEA SAFEGUARDS.

10. RELATIONS WITH OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES. ANUG SAID THAT HIS ASSESSMENT IS THAT IT WOULD BE RELATIVELY EASY FOR ISRAEL TO RESTORE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BLACK AFRICAN NATIONS "WHEN THE SITUATION PERMITS." IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM DR CHALLENGOR ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF ISRAELI ADVISORS IN ETHIOPIA, HE SAID ISRAEL HAS NO MILITARY ADVISORS THERE; IT DOES HAVE SOME AD-

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VISORS BUT NOT MILITARY OFFICERS. ISRAEL IS VERY MUCH CONCERNED THAT THE RED SEA NOT BECOME AN ARAB SEA AND EVERY COUNTRY WHICH IS NOT AN ARAB STATE AUTOMATICALLY WILL HAVE A SYMPATHETIC HEARING AS FAR AS ISRAEL IS CONCERNED. THESE TWO FACTORS LEAD ISRAEL TO SUPPORT ETHIOPIA AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. HE AGREED THAT THE PRESENT REGIME THERE IS "TERRIBLE" AND HE KNOWS THAT SOVIET AND CUBAN TROOPS ARE THERE BUT ISRAEL HAS AN INTEREST IN HELPING TO PRESERVE ETHIOPIAN INDEPENDENCE. ISRAEL IS PLEADED TO SEE THE DEPARTURE OF SOVIET AND CUBAN ADVISORS FROM SOMALIA AND CONGRATULATES ALL THOSE WHO PLAYED A PART IN THAT DEVELOPMENT. ISRAEL HOPES THAT ETHIOPIA WILL OVERCOME ITS INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES AND BE ABLE ALSO TO MOVE AWAY FROM SOVIET INFLUENCE.

11. COMMENT: ANUG AND HIS COLLEAGUES SPOKE FREELY AND EVEN BLUNTLY WITH THE CODEL AND APPEARED TO WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS ISRAELI RELATIONS WITH AFRICA IN A STRAIGHTFORWARD FASHION. WE BELIEVE THIS REVIEW COULD BE SEEN AS A CURRENT REPORT OF THE STATUS OF ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AND PARTICULARLY WITH SOUTH AFRICA. THIS SURVEY INDICATES THAT ISRAEL CONTINUES TO FIND IT IN ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS TO MAINTAIN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SOUTH AFRICA -- PRIMARILY FOR COMMERCIAL REASONS AND BECAUSE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY THERE -- BUT IT IS PURSUING THOSE RELATIONS CAUTIOUSLY AND IN FULL AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT ON BLACK AFRICAN NATIONS. HOWEVER, THAT IMPACT IS LESS IMPORTANT TO ISRAEL NOW, GIVEN THE DECISION BY MOST OF THOSE COUNTRIES TO BREAK RELATIONS IN 1973. END COMMENT

12. THIS MESSAGE HAS NOT BEEN CLEARED BY CODEL DIGGS. LEWIS

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